

S E C R E T

04 MAR 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
VIA: Deputy Director for Operations
25X1 FROM: [REDACTED] Acting Chief, Latin America Division
SUBJECT: The Soviet-Cuban Connection in Central America and the Caribbean
REFERENCE: DCI Memo Dated 2 March 1985

1. On 4 March 1985 we spoke with Ambassador Otto Reich, Chief of the Office of Public Diplomacy at the Department of State, in an attempt to have him insert the suggestions contained in reference. Unfortunately, the White Paper, "The Soviet-Cuban Connection in Central America and the Caribbean," went to the printer on 2 March 1985 and inserting an entire paragraph is not possible. (However, we were able to insert Afghanistan and Ethiopia as particularly gruesome examples of Communist suppression of basic human rights.)

2. We would like to call your attention to Ambassador Reich's previous White Paper, "Broken Promises: Sandinista Repression of Human Rights in Nicaragua," on which the Task Force collaborated in the fall of 1984. Attached to this memorandum are salient portions of the section detailing cruel and inhuman treatment of the Miskito Indians. Moreover, according to Ambassador Reich, there will be imminent opportunities to republicize such atrocities in coming publications from his office.

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Att: Excerpts

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SUBJECT: The Soviet-Cuban Connection in Central America
and the Caribbean

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DO/LA [redacted] (4 March 1985)

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All of this harassment contrasts sharply with treatment of the small group of priests and lay workers involved in the "popular church" in Nicaragua. These people and their supporters receive considerable support from the FSLN-controlled press. Four priests even hold positions in the government: Father Miguel D'Escoto, the Foreign Minister; Father Fernando Cardenal, a Jesuit priest who was vice coordinator of the Sandinista Youth and has recently been named Minister of Education; his brother, Ernesto Cardenal, a former Trappist monk who is Minister of Culture; and Edgard Parrales, Ambassador to the Organization of American States. The priests have been told by the Vatican to choose between political and religious offices.

A statement issued in September 1982 by Archbishop Roach, President of the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, regarding the Sandinistas is still applicable today:

institutions and persons of the Church, including bishops, have been subjected to attacks of a serious, at times disgraceful nature....We cannot fail to protest in the strongest possible terms, the attempted defamation and acts of physical abuse directed at prominent clerics, the inappropriate State control of the communications media, including those of the Church, the apparent threat to the Church's role in education and, most ominous of all, the increasing tendency of public demonstrations to result in bloody conflict.⁴⁷

Sandinista Treatment of the Miskito Indians

A widely publicized example of human rights violation by the Sandinistas involves their treatment of the American Indian peoples who live on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Sandinista violations and the widespread rebellion they have engendered among the American Indians spring from the Marxist program of the Sandinistas, as well as from "historic internal ethnic strains...between the Spanish and indigenous cultures. Such strains predate the revolution, but...have been severely exacerbated by the present government, resulting in violation of numerous internationally guaranteed rights which the Nicaraguan Government is pledged to uphold."⁴⁸

Historically, Zelaya Province on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua has been inhabited by Miskito, Sumo, and Rama Indians, who form a majority of the inhabitants of the region and number perhaps 150,000 to 165,000, and a number of blacks or "creoles," descended from slaves brought to the region from the West Indies.

The people of Zelaya traditionally speak English, since the area was long a British protectorate. Most of them are Protestant (especially Moravian), since most early missionaries to the region were Protestant. In their ethnic background,

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religion, language, culture, and economics, they differ from the rest of Nicaragua's people. Under the Somozas, the central government in Managua generally left the Indians alone; although there was little economic development of the region, the Indians maintained a high degree of self-government. On the village level this self-government was usually democratic, with both tribal and church leaders being elected.

Following the revolution in 1979, the Sandinistas decided to impose state control over the entire country, including the Atlantic Coast region. The Sandinistas insisted that the government "must be in charge of developing [Nicaragua's] natural resources," that it must "create state-run fishing, industrial, and mining enterprises," and that it must "pursue...programs that bring the revolution to the masses, giving priority to the peasant population...along the northern border and the Atlantic Coast."⁴⁹ Clearly these objectives clashed with the values and objectives of the indigenous Indian tribes, who sought a degree of autonomy from the central government, enabling them to maintain their traditional economy and culture and to control their own lands and natural resources.

Friction between the FSLN and the Indians began soon after the revolution, when Sandinistas and their Cuban advisers began moving into the area in large numbers to "rescue" the Atlantic Coast. The FSLN moved to disband the Miskito organization ALPROMISU; the FSLN finally agreed to allow a new group to form known as MISURASATA (an acronym for "Miskito," "Sumo," "Rama," and "Sandinista"). Indian leaders continued to present demands for autonomy that the Sandinistas considered threatening to the revolution. Indian resistance to the Sandinistas increased, sometimes violently. Then, in late 1981, the Sandinistas jailed and tortured MISURASATA leaders. In January and February 1982, citing "security dangers," the government rounded up more than 8,000 Indians living in villages near the Honduran border and shipped them to "relocation camps" in the interior. Thousands more fled to Honduras or Costa Rica to escape "relocation."

The emigration continues: in December 1983, the entire population of the village of Francia Sirpe (about 1,000 people), accompanied by Catholic Bishop Salvador Schlaefer, emigrated to Honduras. They began their celebrated "Christmas March" after learning that they were to be "relocated" by the Sandinistas. In April 1984, some 600 Miskitos fled to refuge in Honduras.

The International League for Human Rights has documented this cultural collision between the Sandinistas and the Indians. It stated:

Despite the fact that there remains a major need for further information and accountability from the

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Government...facts publicly acknowledged or supplied by the Nicaraguan Government alone are sufficient to make the case that Indian rights have been badly violated:

- The entire Indian leadership was arbitrarily arrested imprisoned, and interrogated.
- The Indians' organization (Misurasata) was disbanded by the government.
- Indian rights to self-government, to land, and to resources were denied by new government policies.
- Up to 14,500 Indians were forcibly relocated to camps where they have been detained or denied freedom of movement.
- Some 16,000 Indians fled to refugee camps in Honduras to avoid being relocated to the camps in Nicaragua.
- 39 Indian villages, including livestock, personal effects, crops, fruit trees, and so forth, were completely destroyed by Nicaraguan government forces in January and February 1982.
- The entire Indian region has been under strict military rule, even at the village level.
- Many hundreds of Indians have been killed, injured, or arrested and imprisoned in an ever-deteriorating Indian crisis.

Furthermore, "the de facto discrimination against the Indians of the East Coast has taken on such proportions that it also includes abridgement of religious freedom, as well as cultural rights."⁵⁰

Similarly, the Organization of American States has investigated many complaints against the Sandinistas for their human rights violations against the Miskitos. According to the OAS:

In the period between January 1 and February 20, 1982, the relocation of approximately 8,500 people was effected. Approximately half of the Rio Coco region population fled to Honduras, fearing that their lives were in danger.... The relocation in Tasba Pri [Sandinista "relocation camp"] of some Miskitos, and the flight to Honduras of others, uprooted the Miskitos from the banks of the Coco River, where they had lived from time immemorial, resulting in the division of numerous towns and entire families, the destruction of their homes, the loss of their livestock and, in some cases, all of their belongings. The Miskito structure of authority was undermined and later dissolved de facto as a result of the repression of the Misurasata leaders, who were accused of "counter-revolutionary" activities. Later...the Miskito villages were increasingly harassed, and the deprivation or limitations on the liberty of the Miskitos became more frequent, culminating on November 4, 1982, with the establishment of a military emergency zone....

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Hundreds of Miskitos have been arbitrarily detained without any formalities and under vague accusations of carrying out "counter-revolutionary activities"; many of these detentions have been followed by prolonged periods of incomunicado imprisonment and in some cases the Commission has verified that illegal torture and abuse took place.⁵¹

That same OAS report noted cases of illegal arrest and detention and approximately 70 cases of disappearances linked to government security forces. Further, the compulsory relocation was marked by a tragic helicopter accident in December 1982 in which 75 Miskito children and 9 mothers died. The report characterized the Indian situation as one of "inevitable economic dependence on the government, as they have been deprived of their traditional means of subsistence...."⁵²

As a result of repressive Sandinista policies, a fourth of surviving Indians are in "relocation camps" such as Tasba Pri or in refugee camps in Honduras or Costa Rica. Half of the Miskito and Sumo villages have been totally destroyed, with their inhabitants killed, "relocated," or driven away. Indian rights to self-government, land, or control over any natural resources have been abolished by the government. Subsistence farming, fishing, and hunting are strictly controlled and have disappeared in many areas. Access to staple foods is so limited that hunger is a constant problem and starvation a possibility. With the undermining of the Moravian Church's humanitarian activities, many villages have been without medicine or doctors or pastors, in some cases for more than two years. Freedom of movement is severely and arbitrarily restricted by the Sandinistas. In many cases canoes (major method of transport in this seashore area) have been confiscated or their use prohibited.

Sandinista Denial of Free Elections

If free elections are the heart of a democratic system of government, perhaps the most significant human rights "failure" of the Sandinistas has been their refusal to hold the genuinely democratic elections they promised in 1979. Democratic countries generally have much better human rights records than non-democratic ones--if only because democratic leaders must be responsive to the people.

Because the Sandinistas see genuine democracy as a threat to their monopoly of power and, thus, to their ability to carry out their Marxist-Leninist program, the Sandinistas avoided holding elections for as long as possible. Indeed, they have explicitly stated their reasons for avoiding democratic elections.

As recently as May 1984, Bayardo Arce, one of the nine comandantes of the FSLN Directorate and head of the commission appointed to prepare for the "elections" scheduled for November